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Gallery Exhibition Schedule

Mel RAMOS: Sirens & Heroes

November 2, 2017–January 13, 2018

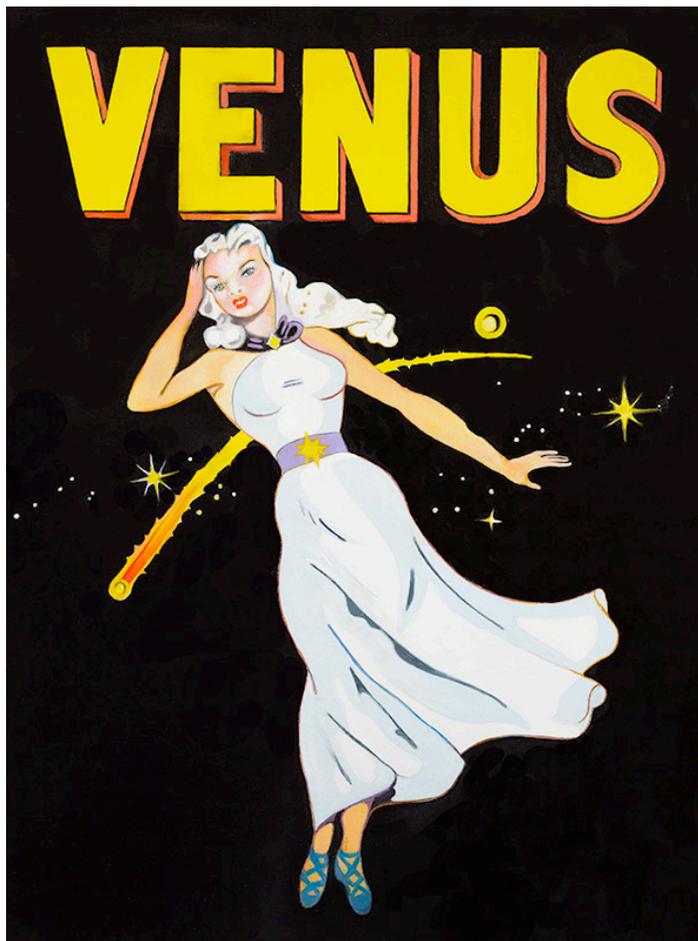
As a young artist in the early 1960s, Mel Ramos made portraits of figures he particularly admired. He painted Batman and Wonder Woman and other comic book characters, rendering them on canvas with brushwork he'd learned by studying Old Masters. Concurrently with Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein—yet independently of both—Mel Ramos pioneered an entirely new vision of modern art popularly known as *Pop*.

More than half a century later, Ramos has returned to some of the subjects that made him famous, not only the superheroes he painted from 1961 to 1963 but also the pin-up-inspired nudes he began depicting in 1964. This November a broad selection of these new paintings goes on view at MODERNISM, together with chrome sculptures that show his female subjects cavorting with oversized golf balls and martini glasses.

Together these works constitute a mini-retrospective in which the artist revisits highlights of his career with the mastery gained from decades of practice. The exhibition also shows Ramos' artistic prescience. Within the context of contemporary culture (and with midcentury characters such as Wonder Woman making Hollywood comebacks), his Pop vision seems more pertinent than ever.

Ramos's superheroes and nudes are deeply interrelated, both products of his search for iconic subjects. "Comic books, girlie magazines, magazine ads, billboards are all art to me," he has explained. "The whole point of my art is that art grows out of art. That is central, no matter whether it is high art, low art, popular art or whatever else." For that reason, Ramos has always been attentive to the culture surrounding him, which he has compellingly interpreted through timeless artistic media, reinvigorating well-established genres. Much as his superhero paintings draw on the history of heroic portraiture reaching back to masterpieces by Jacques-Louis David, he has integrated the pin-up into the tradition of nudes exemplified by past masters including Francois Boucher.

Yet it would be a mistake to see Ramos purely as a formalist. His visual juxtapositions give the work an ironic edge. From his breakthrough *Chiquita Banana* of 1964 to his *Jelly Belly* of 2017, he has frequently paired nudes with food products, suggesting that popular culture treats women like consumables. His



Venus, 2017, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

MODERNISM

representations of objectification could not be more timely as stories of sexual harassment dominate the news.

Crucial to his Pop sensibility, Ramos keeps a cool distance from the issues his paintings evoke. His dedication to making art that grows out of art manifests in his extraordinary command of form and color, delivered with virtuoso brushwork in thick impasto. In that sense, the work is as timeless as the Old Masters he once studied.

Mel Ramos's work has been exhibited extensively worldwide, including a big retrospective at the Albertina Museum in Vienna, and is featured in the collections of major museums in Europe and the U.S.



The public is invited to attend a reception for the artist, on Thursday, November 2nd, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425,
OR EMAIL INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM

HI-RES IMAGES ON REQUEST.



Jelly Belly, 2017, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches